

SNAPPING HIP SYNDROME

◆ What is it?

This is a snapping or popping sensation that some people experience either in the outer side (lateral) of the hip or in the front of the hip or groin. Individuals with snapping hip syndrome may feel it when they walk, get up from a chair or swing your leg around. They describe feeling or hearing a "snapping" sensation in the hip. Snapping hip is usually painless and harmless, although the sensation can be annoying. Young athletes and dancers frequently experience snapping hip.

◆ Signs and Symptoms of this Condition

- Snapping or popping sensation in the outer/lateral hip, front of hip or in groin (reproduced often during walking or jogging, getting up from a chair, or performing sit-ups or leg lifts/flutter kicks)
- Occasionally is painful as well.

◆ Causes

- The snapping sensation results from the movement of a muscle or tendon (the tough, fibrous tissue that connects muscle to bone) over a bony structure. **There are three different types of Snapping Hip Syndrome:**
 - External (Due to tight Iliotibial band that passes over the outside of the hip over the large bump called the greater trochanter of the femur bone)
 - The iliotibial band (thick connective tissue) passes over the broad, flat portion of the femur (thigh bone) known as the greater trochanter. When the hip is straight, the band is behind the greater trochanter. When the hip bends, the band moves over the greater trochanter so that it is in front of it. If the band is too tight, it can be like a stretched rubber band over the greater trochanter. Because the trochanter juts out slightly, the movement of the band across it creates the snap you hear or feel. Eventually, this could lead to hip bursitis (Greater Trochanteric Bursitis). Bursitis is a painful thickening and inflammation of the bursa, a fluid-filled sac that allows the muscle to move smoothly over bone.
 - Internal (Due to tight hip flexor muscle/tendon called the Iliopsoas muscle/tendon)
 - The Iliopsoas tendon from the Iliopsoas muscle (a muscle that flexes or raises your thigh) that could cause a snapping hip runs from the inside of the thighbone (attaching to a bony bump on the inner portion of the femur or thigh bone known as the lesser trochanter) up through the pelvis to the back. As you bend the hip raising the thigh, the tendon shifts across the lesser trochanter of the thigh bone. When you straighten the hip, the tendon moves back to the side of the thighbone.

This back-and-forth motion across the head of the thighbone causes the snapping, especially if this hip flexor muscle and tendon are too tight. A bursa is also located here just like the greater trochanter, and repetitive snapping of the tendon over the lesser trochanter and bursa located there can lead to bursitis. Bursitis is a painful thickening and inflammation of the bursa, a fluid-filled sac that allows the muscle to move smoothly over bone.

- Internal (Due to torn cartilage in the hip socket)
 - A tear in the cartilage or some bone debris in the hip joint can also cause a snapping or clicking sensation. This type of snapping hip usually causes pain and may be disabling. A loose piece of cartilage can cause the hip to catch or lock up.

◆ **What Can I do to Prevent Snapping Hip Syndrome?**

- Appropriately warm up and stretch before practice or competition.
- Maintain appropriate conditioning:
 - Hip flexibility (of hip flexors and outer hip/buttocks muscles)
- Avoid leg lifts/flutter kicks.

◆ **Prognosis**

- This condition is usually curable with appropriate treatment, or sometimes it heals spontaneously. If it is painless, there is little cause for concern.
- If it is bothersome or painful, stretching of the tight structures can alleviate the symptoms in 6-8 weeks of consistent attention.

◆ **Treatment**

- Rest – no running, jumping, hiking (especially running or hiking hills) while treating the problem.
- Piriformis, hip abductor, and hip flexor muscle stretching. **See Below** Once a stretch of the involved muscle is obtained, hold the stretch 30 seconds and repeat 3 repetitions (with 30 second to 1 minute rest between repetitions). Perform this stretching twice per day.
- Avoid sit-ups or leg lifts/flutter kicks.
- Slowly progress back into jogging once you are symptom-free.

